

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

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AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 177

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, CB

SUBJ: THIRD DAY OF KC DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE

REF: PHNOM PENH 123

1. FIGHTING CONTINUES TO BE HEAVY WITH FANK GENERALLY REACTING QUICKLY AND HOLDING ITS OWN AROUND PHNOM PENH, BUT FACING WHAT IS A SIGNIFICANT ENEMY CHALLENGE ALONG THE MEKONG AND ROUTE 1 BETWEEN PHNOM PENH AND THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE BORDER.

2. NORTHWEST OF THE CITY, THE 7TH DIVISION STILL HAS NOT COMPLETED THE LINKUP BETWEEN THE DIVISION COMMAND POST AREA EASTWARD TO THE TONLE SAP RIVER. HOWEVER, FANK TROOPS HAVE REPORTED EXTREMELY HEAVY ENEMY CASUALTIES, BETWEEN 350-400 KILLED.

3. FANK SWEEPING AND CLEARING OPERATIONS ARE CONTINUING ON THE EAST BANK OF THE MEKONG OPPOSITE PHNOM PENH. AIRBORNE FORCES LATE JANUARY 2 RECAPTURED THE MILITARY SUB-DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS FOR THE EAST BANK. THE SITUATION CLOSE TO THE BANK SEEMS MORE OR LESS UNDER CONTROL, BUT ENEMY FORCES IN THE AREA WILL STILL BE ABLE TO ROCKET THE CITY UNTIL THEY ARE PUSHED FARTHER OUT. TWO ROCKETS FIRED AT PHNOM PENH DURING THE EVENING OF
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JANUARY 2 LANDED IN THE RIVER NORTHEAST OF THE CITY. DURING

THE MORNING OF JANUARY 3 FIVE MORE ROCKETS WERE FIRED;
ONE HIT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS(WHICH IS LOCATED ON THE RIVER
) ,
ANOTHER LANDED IN THE RIVER WHILE THE THREE OTHERS LANDED IN THE NEAR
BY
ROYAL PALACE AREA. CASUALTIES ARE REPORTED AS SEVEN PERSONS WOUNDED
AND ONE KILLED.

4. THE COMMUNISTS NOW CONTROL 15 KILOMETERS OF HIGHWAY 1 ALONG
THE MEKONG BEGINNING APPROXIMATELY 20 KMS. SOUTH OF PHNOM PENH.
A FANK BATTALION ON THE SOUTHERN END OF THE CUT HAS BEEN OUT OF
CONTACT SINCE THE AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 2 AND IS NOW REPORTED TO
HAVE BEEN DESTROYED WITH MANY OF ITS PERSONNEL CAPTURED BY
THE KC. THE BRIGAD HEADQUARTERS HAS FALLEN BACK AND CONSOLI-
DATED TO THE NORTHWEST WITH FOUR BATTALIONS AND FOUR 105
ARTILLERY WEAPONS.

5. ALONG THE EAST BANK OF THE MEKONG, THE KC ARE MAKING HEAD-
WAY. PEAM CHOR HAS NOW BEEN COMPLETELY LOST (SEE REFTTEL) AND
OTHER SMALLER NAVAL POSITIONS ARE FALLING BACK TO NEAK LUONG
FROM THE NORTH AND SOUTH. A KEY "CHOKE POINT"
ON THE EAST BANK OF THE MEKONG OPPOSITE THE CUT ON ROUTE 1 IS
ALSO COMING UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE. FANK IS NOT YET IN A POSITION
TO SERIOUSLY CONTEST THIS AREA SINCE ITS IMMEDIATE PRIORITY IS
AROUND PHNOM PENH. THE DEPARTURE OF THE NEXT MEKONG CONVOY FOR
PHNOM PENH HAS NOW BEEN POSTPONED FROM JANUARY 5 UNTIL JANUARY 7.

6. ROUTE 4 FROM PHNOM PENH TO KOMPONG SPEU IS OPEN TO MILITARY
TRAFFIC AND THERE IS NO CONTACT IN ITS VICINITY. SOUTH OF ROUTE 4,
IN THE 3RD DISION AREA, FANK HAS REPORTED KILLING 172 ENEMY
WHILE ITSELF LOSING ONLY 3 KILLED AND 46 WOUNDED. NORTH OF
ROUTE 4, TUOL LEAP IS STILL SURROUNDED, BUT FANK HAS
REACTED QUICKLY TO PREVENT A THREAT TO POCHENTONG AIRPORT AND
THE MAIN AMMO DEPOT. TWO FANK BATTALIONS FROM KOMPONG
CHHNANG (5TH BRIGADE) HAVE ALREADY BEEN BROUGHT INTO THIS
AREA, A THIRD IS COMING TODAY, AND THE LAST BATTALION OF THIS
INTERVENTION BRIGADE WILL BE FLOWN IN TOMORROW. THESE BATTALIONS,
ALONG WITH THREE ARMORED SQUADRONS ARE ATTACKING NORTHWARD TO
RELIEVE THE ENCIRCLED FANK GARRISON AT TOUL LEAP AND PROGRESS
HAS BEEN MADE. ON THIS FRONT, FANK HAS MOVED FORCES QUICKLY
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AND EFFECTIVELY TO COUNTER A SERIOUS CHALLENGE.

7. COMMENT: THE ENEMY CONTINUES TO HAVE SEVERAL OPTIONS WITH
SOME OF HIS FORCES NOT YET COMMITTED. HIS PRIMARY OBJECTIVE
MAY WELL BE INTERDICTING THE MEKONG BUT IN THE MEANTIME HE IS
KEEPING FANK TIED UP AROUND PHNOM PENH. AROUND THE CAPITAL
HOWEVER,
THE MILITARY SITUATION IS IMPROVING STEADILY AS FANK IS RE-

ACTING IN A PROFESSIONAL, COMPETENT MANNER. UNTIL THE PHNOM
PENH FRONT BECOMES MORE STABILIZED, FANK CANNOT COMMIT SUFFICIENT
FORCES TO COPE WITH THE ENEMY THREAT ON THE MEKONG RIVER.
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